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BRIEFS AND COMMENTS

POLAND: New Party Chief

The appointment of Stanislaw Kania, Poland's top security official, as party leader could lead to renewed conflict with the workers if they perceive that the party is now unlikely to fulfill the recent strike agreements.

Although little is known about Kania, available information indicates that he favors unspecified drastic measures to correct Poland's economic problems, a hard line toward dissidents, and stringent containment of Church activity and influence. He strongly opposed the visit of Pope John Paul II to Poland and has argued against giving the Church greater access to the media.

Kania, 53, has worked in the party apparatus since the 1950s and for the past 10 years has been responsible for military and security affairs. He added Church affairs to his portfolio in the mid-1970s and in recent weeks has been overseeing party organizational matters.

There is a strong possibility that Moscow had a hand in Gierek's replacement. The Soviets expressed support for Gierek during the strikes, but once the settlement was reached last weekend they began dropping hints of their dissatisfaction with him and the concessions he granted the strikers. The Soviet press has failed to mention Gierek's name since 31 August in the numerous articles it has published on the situation in Poland.

The choice of Kania as first secretary, whether promoted by the Soviet leaders or not, has to please them. The image of firmness and orthodoxy that he will bring to the top party post is something Moscow has been calling for repeatedly in its recent press commentary. The details of Kania's relationship with the Kremlin are unknown; but as security chief he would have had close contact with Soviet KGB head and Politburo member Andropov and is presumably well known to the Soviets.

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3

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53